Social Media and Online Communities for Family Support Groups

Presented by Diandre Glover Thomas
Program Coordinator
Kentucky Autism Training Center
Learning Objectives

• Participants will learn about the benefits of creating an online network of support

• Participants will learn about roles, rules and privacy issues within online communities

• Participants will learn how to set up a Facebook group and a Yahoo group

• Participants will learn best practices to keep their online community active
Isolation

Parents of children with autism need to connect with other parents in a supportive environment on a regular basis.
Three Benefits of Social Networks for Support Groups

• Give parents of children with autism an opportunity to meet and connect with other parents
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• Help support groups organize meetings, activities and events.
Three Benefits of Social Networks for Support Groups

• Give parents of children with autism an opportunity to meet and connect with other parents.
• Help support groups organize meetings, activities and events.
• Provide an opportunity for parents to share information about helpful resources and/or provide supportive words of encouragement for online community members.
Meet and Connect with Other Parents

Through sharing pictures, videos and stories about their families’ highs and lows support group members are able to get to know each other better and form a deeper connection with one another.
Organize Meetings, Activities and Events

Support groups can post information about social activities and fundraisers such as awareness walks, bake sales, pot luck dinners and monthly meeting updates.
Parents can share if they had a tough day with their child or if their child did something they were really proud of or they can share resource information such as free training events and summer camp information.
Two choices

Join an existing online group

Start your own online group
Join an Existing Online Group
Join an Existing Online Group

**PRO**

Community is already in place and you only need to become a member and join in the conversation.
Join an Existing Online Group

CON
The community is already in place and you have to get to know the people in the network.
Existing Groups can be found on:

Yahoo Groups
Facebook Groups
SupportGroups.com
MyAutismTeam.com
Joining an existing online group is a good option if you do not currently belong to a support group or if you think your support group does not want to participate in an online community.
Start Your Own Online Group
Start Your Own Online Group

**PROS**

Online community becomes an extension of your current support group
Start Your Own Online Group

**PROS**

You already know your support group members and the online community gives you an opportunity to get to talk with them more often.
Start Your Own Online Group

PROS

The support group members can create their own set of moderation rules for the online community.
Start Your Own Online Group

CONS

Someone in the support group will need to set up the online community.
Start Your Own Online Group

CONS

Someone in the support group will need to moderate discussions and make sure nothing inappropriate is being said and to keep the community spam free.
Start Your Own Online Group

CONS

Someone will need to manage the community and keep the conversation flowing on the network.
Roles, Rules and Privacy

You need to have them!
Roles

Community Manager

Moderator

Members
What’s the Difference?

Community Manager

Three responsibilities

• Look through all of the posts online to make sure everyone is getting their question answered

• Keep the conversation going by creating content daily

• To reach out to dormant members through email and at support group meetings to encourage them to join the conversation

Moderator

Three responsibilities

• To prevent the development of negative information

• To prevent the development of arguments that may conflict with the healthy behaviors the network is trying to promote

• To identify disrespectful posts on the public forum and delete them, warn the member who posted it, and keep records so that people who repeat this behavior can be removed from membership or have limited posting privileges
Rules

Best Practices
- Set up rules from the beginning
- Do not make them long or complicated
- Refer to the rules when a site members online behavior is inappropriate to help them understand why an action was taken
- Remember it's okay to disagree with opinions but the rules are necessary to protect the integrity of the online community

Example of rules
We do not permit:
- Sexual or offensive language or content
- Harassment of other users
- Abuse or disruption of our services
- The impersonation of Autism Support Group community manager or moderator
- Advertising of third party services or websites
Privacy

**Best Practices**

- Don’t share any information online that you would not feel comfortable sharing with an entire group in person.

- Understand how the online community works.

- Always check your privacy settings.
Let’s Have Some Fun!!
Facebook Groups
Let’s Create a Facebook Group

Step One

Go to:
facebook.com/about/groups

Click on Create Group
Let’s Create a Facebook Group

Step Two
Create a Group Name
Select members
Select Privacy Settings
(Choose One)
- Open
- Closed
- Secret
Click Create
Let’s Create a Facebook Group

Step Three

Congratulations you have a new group!
Secret Facebook Groups for Support Groups

**Group Chats** – Everyone in the group can chat online at the same time

**Shared documents** – If you need to share notes from the support group meetings or flyers for activities

**Private photo sharing**—Only Secret Group members can see photos

**Shared email address** to post messages to the group

Learn more about these features and adjusting group settings:
http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/how-to-use-secret-facebook-groups-to-enhance-your-business
Yahoo Groups
Let's Create a Yahoo Group

Step One

• Go to yahoo.com and create an account

• Go to: http://groups.yahoo.com/start

• Select a Yahoo Groups category in the Search group categories box enter "autism for a more specific category"

• Click on the suggested link in blue and click place my group here
Let’s Create a Yahoo Group

Step Two

• Create a Group name
• Select group email address (this works like an email listserv any email sent to this address gets distributed to everyone in the group)
• Describe your group and click continue
Let’s Create a Yahoo Group

Step Three

• Select your yahoo profile and the email address that responses on the list will go to. The default address is the one that you used when you began to register a group.

• Enter security code and click continue
Let’s Create a Yahoo Group

Step Four

• You will get a homepage for your group and an email account for the group
• You can customize who can join and/or post messages and you can send an email invitation for members to join the group.

Congratulations you have a new group!
Yahoo Groups

Allow a shared:

• Calendar
• Files
• Photos
• Polls
• Links
• Email

How to use Yahoo Groups
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buSoEg0Ckx0
Engagement

Keep them coming back!
Interest
Trust
Value
Respect
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fun</th>
<th>Supportive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Photos</td>
<td>• Get well soon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ecards</td>
<td>• Words of encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Well wishes (Happy Birthday, Anniversary, Congrats on the new baby,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>marriage, graduation, promotion etc.)</td>
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Ideas to Increase Communication

Interesting

• Articles read online that are relevant to the group
• Share information from other autism online communities and email listservs
• Community Events

Important

Offline Activities

• Support group meetings, notes and date reminders
• Activities such as awareness walks, fundraisers, bake sales, parent’s or kids day out
Most Important Key to Engagement

Give responses back to posts
Go out and start or join those online groups today!

QUESTIONS???
Diandre Glover Thomas
diandre.gloverthomas@louisville.edu
(502)852-2467